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NEWS RELEASE

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2009 NECAP Tests: Mixed Results Demonstrate Need to Accelerate State Reforms and Progress

Results of the fall 2009 New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) tests in reading, mathematics, and writing released today (February 3rd) show a slight but not significant increase in reading and mathematics scores in elementary and middle schools.

High-school scores improved significantly in reading (73% proficient, up 4 points) and writing (55% proficient, up 13 points), but were unchanged in mathematics.

The 2009 high-school four-year graduation rate improved by 1.6 percentage points, to 75.5%, still 4.5 points below the 2012 goal of 80%.

“The results we are announcing today highlight the fact that we are seeing continued progress. Our student proficiencies in all tests at all school levels have improved since the first year of NECAP testing in 2005 for grades 3 through 8 and in 2007 for grade 11,” said Governor Donald L. Carcieri. “We’ve benchmarked our standards and assessments with New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine. Our high-school reading score of 73% proficient matched New Hampshire and surpassed Maine and Vermont. Our state’s high-school writing score was the highest of all 3 states tested at 55%.

“Despite some encouraging news, we must do better, especially in mathematics, where our scores have not changed appreciably,” cautioned the Governor. “While we have set the foundation for our students’ success with our standards and assessments, we must sustain and further strengthen our reform efforts. Most importantly, the pace of improvement must be accelerated to meet our goals.”

“Today’s results don’t show the progress that we would like to see, but some schools and districts have made significant gains,” said Robert G. Flanders, Jr., Esq., Chairman of the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education. “We need to learn from these improving schools and districts and we need to expand their work to prepare all of our students for success in college, careers, and life.”

“While there are some gains in our 2009 test scores, we’re not anywhere close to where we need to be,” said Deborah A. Gist, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. “Though I am pleased with the improvements in reading and writing scores at our high schools, I am concerned that achievement gaps persist and have even widened, especially in mathematics.

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This performance underscores the importance of our plans to improve the effectiveness of district programs and to support innovative programs and practices that improve student achievement.

“We can learn from the schools and districts that show significant gains in today’s results,” Commissioner Gist continued. “All of us – students, teachers, parents, the entire community – will have to work together to transform education and to advance learning for all students.”

The NECAP results were released at the Anthony Carnevale Elementary School, in Providence, which made among the largest gains in the state in both reading and mathematics: up 17 points in reading (61% proficient) and up 16 points in mathematics (55% proficient).

The NECAP tests in reading and mathematics were administered jointly in October 2009 to students in grades 3-8 and in Rhode Island, Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont. At the high-school level (grade 11), Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Vermont students were tested in reading, mathematics, and writing. NECAP is the only multistate testing program in the nation.

Rhode Island scores have improved in all tests at all school levels since the first year of NECAP testing (2005 for grades 3-8, 2007 for grade 11).

This year, the Rhode Island reading score for grades 3-8 matched the Maine score (70% proficient), and the Rhode Island high-school reading score (73% proficient) matched New Hampshire and surpassed Maine and Vermont. The Rhode Island writing score (55% proficient) was the best of the three tested states.

On the reading tests, 55% of Rhode Island high schools made significant gains (more than 3 points), and 10% had significant losses.

Districts making improvements of more than 10 percentage points in reading include Chariho (elementary school: 10.8 percentage points, high school, 10.4 points), North Smithfield (middle school: 20.4 points), and, at the high-school level, Central Falls (10.6 points), Woonsocket (11.2), North Kingstown (12.3), and Newport (15.5). The BEACON Charter School, The William M. Davies Jr. Career-Technical High School, the Department of Corrections Education Unit, the Highlander Charter School, and the International Charter School also improved by more than 10 points in reading.

Among elementary schools, 36% had significant gains in mathematics and 29% had significant losses. Among middle schools, 45% had significant gains and 7% had significant losses. In mathematics, 29% of the high schools had significant gains and 29 % had significant losses.

Districts making improvements of more than 10 points in mathematics include Chariho (elementary: 14.2 points, high school: 10.1 points), New Shoreham (middle school: 13.8), and Portsmouth (14.8 points). The Rhode Island School for the Deaf, UCAP, and the Highlander Charter School also improved by more than 10 points in mathematics.

A full report on the October 2009 test results and the 2009 graduation rates is posted on the RIDE Web site, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Assessment/default.aspx>

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